

Probe of \$8.1 Million Records System Slated

County Orders Inquiry to Determine if Faulty Equipment Was Installed in Sheriff's Project

BY CHARLES DONALDSON

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An investigation was ordered by Los Angeles County supervisors Tuesday to determine whether a faulty video-file records system was installed in a \$19.5 million sheriff's microwave communications project.

Arthur G. Will, chief administrative officer, said he hoped to report in 30 days whether the system meets contract specifications—a decision which could lead to a court suit against the builder.

Ampex Corp., developer of the equipment, designated as ORACLE, for Optimum Records Automation for Courts and Law Enforcement, delivered the first units in August, 1971. The county paid rentals totaling \$628,000, but halted them in December of that year in a dispute over performance of the equipment.

The program involves use of a computer to retrieve information stored on videotape. As the county envisioned it, an employee in an outlying sheriff's station would be able to have requested records sought out by the computer and televised in a matter of moments.

County officials say the system works, but the question is: Does it meet the performance specifications spelled out in the contract?

"We have had a long series of technical discussions with Ampex on whether the product meets contract specifications. We are not sure and they are not sure we got what we contracted for. They are as concerned as we are," Will said.

Supervisor Kenneth Hahn initiated the call for a review and report by Will in 30 days on the ORACLE situation, saying, "Maybe it is a giant boondoggle," and adding he had heard the county was going to court over the system's performance.

Will said, "A lawsuit is always

possible when something does not meet contract specifications. But this is not a simple piece of equipment and a rather considerable amount of staff time has been invested seeking the answers. We are in discussion with the company and I hope to have the talks completed within the 30-day period you set for the report."

Will said the video-file aspect of the program amounted to a total of \$8.1 million and said the remainder of the spending goes toward the sheriff's microwave communication and dispatch systems which will be used with or without ORACLE.

He said \$1.4 million spent to prepare the Hall of Justice and sheriff's stations for the new equipment was necessary work.

In other actions the county voted to increase the fee for its 15 golf courses effective July 1. The new rate for an 18-hole round of play will be \$3.50 on weekdays and \$4 on weekends and holidays. Currently the rate is \$3 for weekdays and \$3.50 for weekends and holidays.

The senior citizen rate also will be increased, from \$1 to \$1.25.

The increases were approved in an effort to reduce county losses on its golf course operations.

The supervisors also:

—Individually honored members of the Verbum Dei High School basketball team from the Watts area for winning the school's fifth straight CIF Southern Section championship.

—Called for a report within 60 days on the possibility of buying "new, highly sophisticated fire fighting equipment," including special fire suits, that have been developed

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by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

—Ordered the POW and MIA flags that have been flying at county fire stations and sheriff's offices taken down so they can be given to former prisoners of war during May ceremonies being planned by the county for the returnees.

—Called for a study of the possible merger of the 35-man county Harbor Patrol that polices Marina del Rey and the Castaic Lakes with the Department of Beaches.

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